

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims according to the following listing, in which insertions are indicated by underline and deletions are indicated by strikethrough or double brackets. This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

1. (Currently amended) A food treatment apparatus, comprising a base unit and a canister for rotatable placement on the base unit;

said base unit comprising

a housing comprising a cradle section and a control panel section;

a vacuum pump disposed in the housing;

a control unit disposed in the housing;

a control panel on the housing and in electronic communication with the control unit;

at least one rotatable roller in the cradle section of the housing; and

an electric motor operatively connected to the rollers for causing rotation thereof;

said canister comprising a substantially cylindrical main body and a cover comprising a main cover plate and a valve and handle assembly operatively attached to the main cover plate, said cover being sealably attachable to said main body,

wherein said valve and handle assembly comprises:

a valve movable between an open position and a closed position;

a handle for moving the valve between the open and closed positions thereof, the handle having an inner surface with gear teeth formed thereon in a curved pattern; and

a gear plate disposed between said valve and said handle, said gear plate having a curved outer edge with a plurality of gear teeth formed thereon, the gear

plate situated so that the gear teeth thereof intermesh with the gear teeth of the handle;

and wherein said valve comprises:

a valve body,

a substantially spherical valve ball which fits into the valve body and which has a hollow central bore formed therethrough, and

a valve stem having a proximal end which fits in the valve body and which engages the valve ball, and a distal end which is operatively connected to the gear plate.

2. (original) The food treatment apparatus of claim 1, wherein said housing comprises a storage section formed therein, and a hinged cover over said storage section.

3. (original) The food treatment apparatus of claim 1, wherein the cradle section of the housing has at least one arcuate cutout formed therein to allow a user to insert a hand below a portion of said canister as it rests on said cradle section.

4. (Currently amended) The food treatment apparatus of claim 1, wherein said canister ~~cover~~ comprises a valve and handle assembly which allows air to enter said canister in ~~an~~ the open position thereof said valve.

5. (Currently amended) The food treatment apparatus of claim 4, wherein ~~said valve and handle assembly~~ comprises a ball valve which is operatively connected to a handle, wherein pivoting movement of said handle causes corresponding responsive movement of said ball valve.

6. (original) The food treatment apparatus of claim 1, wherein said main body of said canister is translucent.

7. (original) The food treatment apparatus of claim 1, wherein the main canister body has a plurality of grooves formed in a side thereof, said grooves being alignable with rollers of said base unit.

8. (original) The food treatment apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a vacuum line with a built-in fluid trap for interconnecting said base unit to said canister, wherein said vacuum line comprises a connection fitting for inserting into an opening in said canister valve, wherein said connection fitting has at least two O-ring seals thereon.

9. (original) The food treatment apparatus of claim 1, wherein said base unit comprises four rollers, at least one of which is driven by said motor.

10. (original) The food treatment apparatus of claim 1, wherein said base unit comprises a raised grid having air inlet slots formed therein.

11. (Currently amended) A food treatment apparatus, comprising a base unit and a canister for rotatable placement on the base unit;

said base unit comprising

a housing comprising a cradle section and a control panel section, the housing

having at least one vent opening formed therein;

a vacuum pump disposed in the housing;

a control unit disposed in the housing;

a control panel on the housing and in electronic communication with the control unit; and

at least one rotatable roller in the cradle section of the housing, and an electric motor operatively connected to the rollers for causing rotation thereof;

said canister comprising a substantially cylindrical main body which is substantially translucent, and a cover comprising a valve, a handle for operating said valve, and a gear plate disposed between said handle and said valve,

said cover being sealably attachable to said main body,

wherein said valve comprises:

a valve body comprising a cylindrical sleeve with a hollow passageway formed therethrough, and a branch pipe extending substantially transversely from a central portion of the sleeve;

a substantially cylindrical valve ball dimensioned to fit inside the passageway of the sleeve, said valve ball having a cylindrical bore formed centrally therethrough,

a pair of bushings disposed in said sleeve of said valve body, each of said bushings having a respective inwardly-facing concave sealing surface formed therein, and

a valve stem extending between and interconnecting said valve ball and said gear plate;

wherein pivotal movement of said handle causes corresponding pivotal movement of said valve ball to selectively open or block fluid flow through said valve.

12. (original) The food treatment apparatus of claim 11, wherein said housing comprises a storage section formed therein, and a hinged cover over said storage section.

13. (original) The food treatment apparatus of claim 11, wherein the cradle section of the housing has at least one arcuate cutout formed therein to allow a user to insert a hand below a portion of said canister as it rests on said cradle section..

14-15. [canceled]

16. (original) The food treatment apparatus of claim 11, wherein the main canister body has a plurality of grooves formed in a side thereof, said grooves being alignable with the rollers of said base unit.

17. (original) The food treatment apparatus of claim 11, further comprising a vacuum line with a built-in fluid trap for interconnecting said base unit to said canister, wherein said vacuum line comprises a connection fitting for inserting into an opening in said canister valve, wherein said connection fitting has at least two O-ring seals thereon.

18. (original) The food treatment apparatus of claim 1, wherein said base unit comprises four rollers, at least one of which is driven by said motor.

19. (currently amended) A food treatment apparatus, comprising a base unit and a canister for rotatable placement on the base unit;

said base unit comprising

a housing comprising a cradle section and a control panel section;

a vacuum pump disposed in the housing;

a control unit disposed in the housing;

a control panel on the housing and in electronic communication with the control unit;

at least one rotatable roller in the cradle section of the housing; and
an electric motor operatively connected to the rollers for causing rotation thereof;
said canister comprising a substantially cylindrical main body and a cover comprising a valve
and handle assembly, said cover being sealably attachable to said main body,

wherein said valve and handle assembly comprises:

a valve movable between an open position and a closed position;

a handle for moving the valve between the open and closed positions
thereof, the handle having an inner surface with gear teeth formed thereon in a
curved pattern; and

a gear plate disposed between said valve and said handle, said gear plate
having a curved outer edge with a plurality of gear teeth formed thereon, the gear
plate situated so that the gear teeth thereof intermesh with the gear teeth of the
handle;

and wherein said valve comprises:

a valve body,

a substantially spherical valve ball which fits into the valve body
and which has a hollow central bore formed therethrough, and

a valve stem having a proximal end which fits in the valve body
and which engages the valve ball, and a distal end which is operatively
connected to the gear plate;

and further wherein the main canister body has a plurality of grooves formed in a side
thereof, said grooves being alignable with the rollers of said base unit.[[.]]

DISCUSSION

Upon entry of the present amendment, Claims 1-13 and 16-19 remain in the application. The above-identified Office Action has been reviewed, the references carefully considered, and the Examiner's comments carefully weighed. In view thereof, the present Amendment is submitted. It is contended that by the present amendment, all bases of rejection set forth in the Office Action have been traversed and overcome. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

The applicant wishes to thank the Examiner for the courtesy extended during the personal interview of November 15, 2005, which helped to determine the focus of the present amendment.

Section 103 Issues

In the above-identified Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1, 3-6, 8-11, 13-15, and 17-18 under 35 USC 103(a) as unpatentable over Paumen et al. in view of Starkweather. The Examiner also rejected claims 2 and 12 under 35 USC 103(a) as unpatentable over Paumen et al. in view of Starkweather, and further in view of Hodges et al. Further, the Examiner rejected claims 7, 16 and 19 under 35 USC 103(a) as unpatentable over Paumen et al. in view of Starkweather, and further in view of Miyata et al.

Applicant disagrees with, and traverses the Examiner's 103 rejections. Applicant respectfully submits that the combinations of references cited by the Examiner do not teach applicant's claimed invention.

However, in the interests of expediting prosecution of the application, applicant has amended each of the independent claims to add further detail of the valve or of the valve and handle assembly of applicant's apparatus.

Double Patenting Issues

In the above-identified Office Action, the Examiner provisionally objected to claims 1-19 under the doctrine of obviousness-type double patenting, as being identical to the claims of co-pending application 10/845,905.

Applicant's amendments to the claims of the two respective applications diverge the